Resource 3 (1 of 6)

Group Activity: Four Excerpted Articles

Excerpt 1: From "Strong and Sustainable: How to Reduce Military Spending While Keeping Our Nation Safe," Introduction and Summary

By Lawrence J. Korb and Laura Conley
Center for American Progress, September 2010

Unlike most other federal agencies, the base or the regular defense budget is projected to grow by about 5 percent in real terms over that period [2011–2015]. . . .*

The defense budget can and should be substantially reduced without harming national security for three reasons:

First, we can afford to make cuts. . . .

. . . the portion of the world's military expenditures the United States consumes compared to our potential adversaries has grown from 60 percent to 250 percent. This means that even if the United States were to cut its spending in half it would still be spending more than its current and potential adversaries. . . .

Second, the global security environment has changed, which allows us to change our spending priorities. The need for permanently deployed U.S. forces in Europe to act as a direct deterrent has steadily declined in the two decades since the end of the Cold War. . . .

And third, significant technological advances make our fighting forces far more efficient than even in the near past. The extension of precision-guided munitions and the introduction of night-fighting and all-weather capabilities to the entire air combat force have resulted in a more flexible, effective force. . . .

Source: Korb, L. J., & Conley, L. (2010). Strong and sustainable: How to reduce military spending while keeping our nation safe. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/defensecuts_execsumm.pdf

* *Note:* Although these projections were accurate at the time this article was written, the defense budget actually declined approximately 15% between 2011 and 2015. This is due to the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and the budget sequestration of 2011, according to PolitiFact (Jacobson & Sherman, 2015).

Questions:

- What changes have occurred concerning global security that will allow the United States to reduce its military spending while remaining secure?
- Which of the reasons for reducing the national defense budget is the strongest? Why?

Resource 3 (2 of 6)

Group Activity: Four Excerpted Articles

Excerpt 2: From "Why We Must Reduce Military Spending"

By Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.)
The Huffington Post, July 6, 2010

. . . For decades, the subject of military expenditures has been glaringly absent from public debate. Yet the Pentagon budget for 2010 is $693 billion -- more than all other discretionary spending programs combined. Even subtracting the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military spending still amounts to over 42% of total spending.*

It is irrefutably clear to us that if we do not make substantial cuts in the projected levels of Pentagon spending, we will do substantial damage to our economy and dramatically reduce our quality of life. . . .

Immediately after World War II, with much of the world devastated and the Soviet Union becoming increasingly aggressive, America took on the responsibility of protecting virtually every country that asked for it. Sixty-five years later, we continue to play that role long after there is any justification for it and currently American military spending makes up approximately 42% of all such expenditures worldwide. The nations of Western Europe now collectively have greater resources at their command than we do, yet they continue to depend overwhelmingly on American taxpayers to provide for their defense. . . .

Source: Frank, B., & Paul, R. (2010, July 6). Why we must reduce military spending. Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-barney-frank/why-we-must-reduce-milita_b_636051.html

* *Note:* As of 2015, this figure had declined to 38% of world spending according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies World Military Balance.

Questions:

- Measured as a percentage of military spending worldwide, how big was the U.S. military budget in 2010, and how big was it in 2015?
- What is notable about the authors' relationship, and what does that imply about this issue? What more might you want to know about the authors to understand their point of view?
- Why might we "do substantial damage to our economy" if we do not reduce the projected levels of Pentagon spending?

Resource 3 (3 of 6)

Group Activity: Four Excerpted Articles

Excerpt 3: From "Defense Spending Would Be Great Stimulus"

By Martin Feldstein
Wall Street Journal, December 24, 2008

. . . A 10% increase in defense outlays for procurement and for research would contribute about $20 billion a year to the overall stimulus budget. A 5% rise in spending on operations and maintenance would add an additional $10 billion. That spending could create about 300,000 additional jobs. And raising the military's annual recruitment goal by 15% would provide jobs for an additional 30,000 young men and women in the first year.

. . . A substantial short-term rise in spending on defense and intelligence would both stimulate our economy and strengthen our nation's security.

[Martin] Feldstein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Reagan, is a professor at Harvard and a member of The Wall Street Journal's board of contributors.

Source: Feldstein, M. (2008, December 24). Defense spending would be great stimulus. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123008280526532053.html

Questions:

- How much money does Feldstein project it would cost to create 300,000 additional jobs?
- What would be the benefit of increasing the military's annual recruitment goal by 15%?
- What might the downside be to increasing military spending?

Resource 3 (4 of 6)

Group Activity: Four Excerpted Articles

Excerpt 4: From "UAB Study Confirms Military Spending Helps States Survive Poor Economy"

University of Alabama at Birmingham, June 17, 2010

The researchers found, for example, that an increase in a state's dependence on military spending, from 5 to 10 percent of its total GSP, increased employment about 1 percent—despite nationwide declines in manufacturing—and a $14,000 per household increase in median family income. . . . Poverty rates fell about 2 percent.

Source: University of Alabama-Birmingham. (2010, June 17). UAB study confirms military spending helps states survive poor economy. Retrieved from https://www.uab.edu/newsarchive/78097-uab-study-confirms-military-spending-helps-states-survive-poor-economy

Questions:

- How do increases in military spending related to gross state product (GSP) affect a state's employment rate?
- Why might military spending be related to employment, median family income, and poverty rates?

Resource 3 (5 of 6)

Group Activity: Four Excerpted Articles

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Excerpt 1: From "Strong and Sustainable: How to Reduce Military Spending While Keeping Our Nation Safe," Introduction and Summary

Define: expenditures, deterrent

Key Points:

- We spend significantly more on defense than our adversaries do.
- The end of the Cold War and improvements in military technology have created a new security environment that requires different attitudes about spending.

Questions and Answers (including evidence from the article):

- What changes have occurred concerning global security that will allow the United States to reduce its military spending while remaining secure?

  [We spend much more on defense than do our potential enemies, the Cold War has ended, and improvements in technology have reduced the need for combat troops.]

- Which of the reasons for reducing the national defense budget is the strongest? Why?

  [Student answers will vary. Students should be encouraged to justify their answers with logical arguments.]

Excerpt 2: From "Why We Must Reduce Military Spending"

Define: discretionary spending

Key Points:

- American military spending represented 42% of worldwide military spending as of 2010, although that figure had declined to 38% by 2015.
- Representatives from both the Democratic and Republican parties are concerned about military spending.

Questions and Answers (including evidence from the article):

- Measured as a percentage of military spending worldwide, how big was the U.S. military budget in 2010, and how big was it in 2015?

  ["Currently (as of 2010) American military spending makes up approximately 42% of all such expenditures worldwide." By 2015, that figure had declined to 38%.]

- What is notable about the authors' relationship, and what does that imply about this issue? What more might you want to know about the authors to understand their point of view?

  [Rep. Barney Frank is a Democrat and Rep. Ron Paul is a Republican; the two have very different political ideologies. This issue is important to both parties.]

Resource 3 (6 of 6)

Group Activity: Four Excerpted Articles

- Why might we "do substantial damage to our economy" if we do not reduce the projected levels of Pentagon spending?

  [Student answers will vary, and may mention increases in taxes or debt to pay for the spending.]

Excerpt 3: From "Defense Spending Would Be Great Stimulus"

Define: procurement, stimulus

Key Points:

- Increasing spending on the military could create over 300,000 new jobs.
- Increasing the military's annual recruitment goal could create 30,000 additional jobs.

Questions and Answers (including evidence from the article):

- How much money does Feldstein project it would cost to create 300,000 additional jobs?

  [It would cost $20 billion for procurement and research plus $10 billion for operations and maintenance for a total of $30 billion for 300,000 jobs.]

- What would be the benefit of increasing the military's annual recruitment goal by 15%?

  [Creating 30,000 jobs]

- What might the downside be to increasing military spending?

  [Student answers will vary. We could look hostile to other nations and we would have to continue this spending indefinitely or else we would lose the jobs we created.]

Excerpt 4: From "UAB Study Confirms Military Spending Helps States Survive Poor Economy"

Define: GSP (gross state product), poverty rate

Key Point:

- As a state's dependence on military spending increases, employment rises, family income rises, and poverty rates fall.

Questions and Answers (including evidence from the article):

- How do increases in military spending related to gross state product (GSP) affect a state's employment rate?

  [A 5–10% increase in a state's dependence on military spending increases employment by about 1%.]

- Why might military spending be related to employment, median family income, and poverty rates?

  [As spending increases, more jobs are needed to meet the demand. As more individuals are hired, family income increases and poverty rates fall.]